



## News

from the  
Campaign Trail

- [Tory leader Scheer contradicted on abortion by Quebec lieutenant Alain Rayes](#)
- [McKenna denies claim carbon tax may exceed \\$50 a tonne](#)
- [Liberals, Conservatives unveil campaign slogans ahead of federal election](#)
- [Liberals ask voters to 'choose forward' while Tories vow to help Canadians 'get ahead' in new campaign ads](#)

## Critics Question Scheer's Social Conservatism

Andrew Scheer has spent the past week defending his views on gay marriage and abortion.

Liberal Ralph Goodale resurrected a 2005 video of Scheer opposing same-sex marriage in Parliament. Goodale said that the video is proof that Scheer can't be a Prime Minister for all Canadians. The Conservatives countered that many Liberals also opposed gay marriage at the time, including Ralph Goodale. But the leader's office did not say whether Scheer's views on same-sex marriage had evolved.

A few days later the Conservative leader was forced to correct MP Alain Rayes' comments on abortion. M. Rayes is Scheer's Quebec lieutenant, and as part of his efforts to recruit star

candidates, Rayes had been telling nominees that Scheer would prevent MPs from introducing anti-abortion bills. These statements were reassuring to many Conservative candidates, particularly women and Quebecers. The problem is they're false. This week Scheer confirmed that if he's elected PM then Conservative MPs can introduce any private member's bill they want—including anti-abortion bills.

Scheer and Rayes insist they've always been clear about the Conservatives position on abortion: A Conservative government would not "reopen the debate" or introduce a government bill on the issue.

A major factor in Andrew Scheer Conservative leadership victory

was his social conservatism. He successfully courted religious voters, and they helped him eke out a win against Maxime Bernier. Scheer wants to hold onto this constituency in the general election, without frightening centrist conservatives and blue Liberals. In short, he is walking a very fine line.

It might not work. In 2019, with our contentious political culture, same-sex marriage and abortion are black-and-white issues. There is no middle ground. Scheer could upset both sides with one wrong move.

The Liberals know Scheer's uncomfortableness, of course, and they're trying to define him as a SoCon before the campaign starts. Scheer better get his story straight.

# McKenna Denise Carbon Tax will Rise

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When the federal government and provinces agreed on a national carbon price in 2016, they said it would start at \$20/tonne in 2019, increasing \$10/tonne per year, until it reaches \$50/tonne in 2022. The Liberals have said they would freeze the price at \$50/tonne thereafter.

But, in an interview over the weekend, Environment Minister Catherine McKenna said that a re-elected Liberal government would review the carbon tax with provinces before deciding how to proceed.

Conservative MP Pierre Poilievre immediately pounced on the Minister's remarks, saying that McKenna "accidentally told the truth. She admitted that if re-elected the

carbon tax would go much higher than Liberals previously said." McKenna countered that the Conservatives were misleading Canadians, and that the Liberal position hasn't changed. The federal-provincial agreement lasts until 2022, and the provinces and federal government will have to negotiate any changes to the agreement's terms afterward. The Minister was simply stating the obvious.

The exchange shows the fevered pitch of environment politics. Both the Conservatives and Liberals think they're on the right side of the issue. The Conservatives are eager to attack the carbon tax, saying it will only help government revenues, not fight pollution. It aligns with their focus on

affordability, pocketbook issues and helping Canadians get ahead.

The Liberals, meanwhile, are keen to promote their plan and label Conservatives as climate-science deniers. In her statement denying Poilievre, McKenna said that "to the extent that you care about your planet [...] all the young people that are the largest voting bloc, think carefully about your choices [in the 2019 election]." The Minister couldn't be much clearer in terms of the Liberal's political strategy: the party hopes to woo young voters and other progressives with their environmental policy.

## Election Campaigns Gear Up

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The major political parties are stepping up their preparations for the 2019 election.

The Conservatives and Liberals both released ads featuring their campaign slogans. The Liberal's ad has Justin Trudeau speaking to a diverse group of Canadians, warning of Conservative cuts and imploring Canadians to "Choose Forward." The Conservative ad has Scheer, sitting in blue Oxford shirt, against a backdrop of green trees, telling us how a Conservative government will help put more money in your pocketbook. The ad ends with the Conservative catchphrase, "It's time for you to get ahead."

Both ads are full of the messages we've talked about in past newsletters. Political communication is all about repetition; expect to see them again and again over the coming weeks.

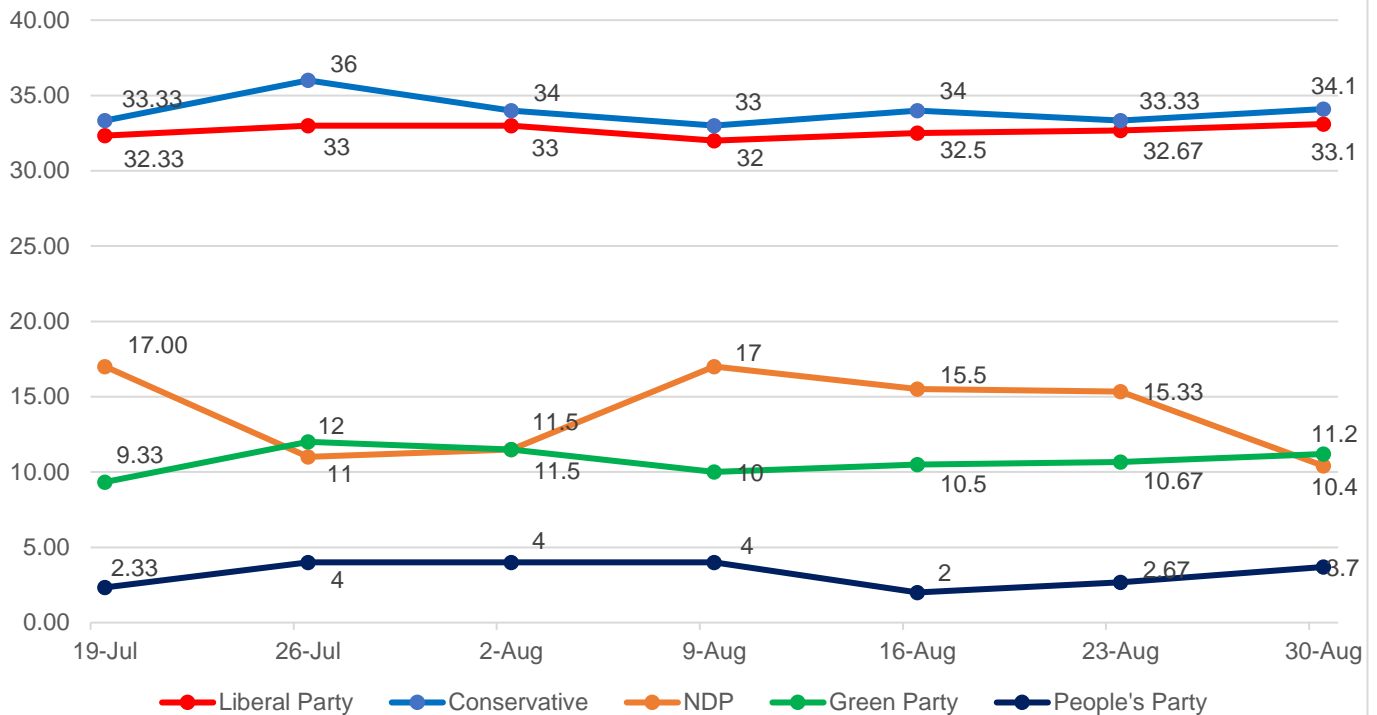
Apart from the "air war" of advertising, the Liberals are also prepping their ground game. The Liberals have setup a separate campaign office in Montreal. The party has done so in the past and, given the importance of Quebec in this election, it makes sense to continue the tradition. The Montreal HQ will be responsible for Quebec-specific messaging, ads and operations.

Meanwhile, senior government staffers are transferring over to the Liberal campaign. The process should be finished by the end of this week.

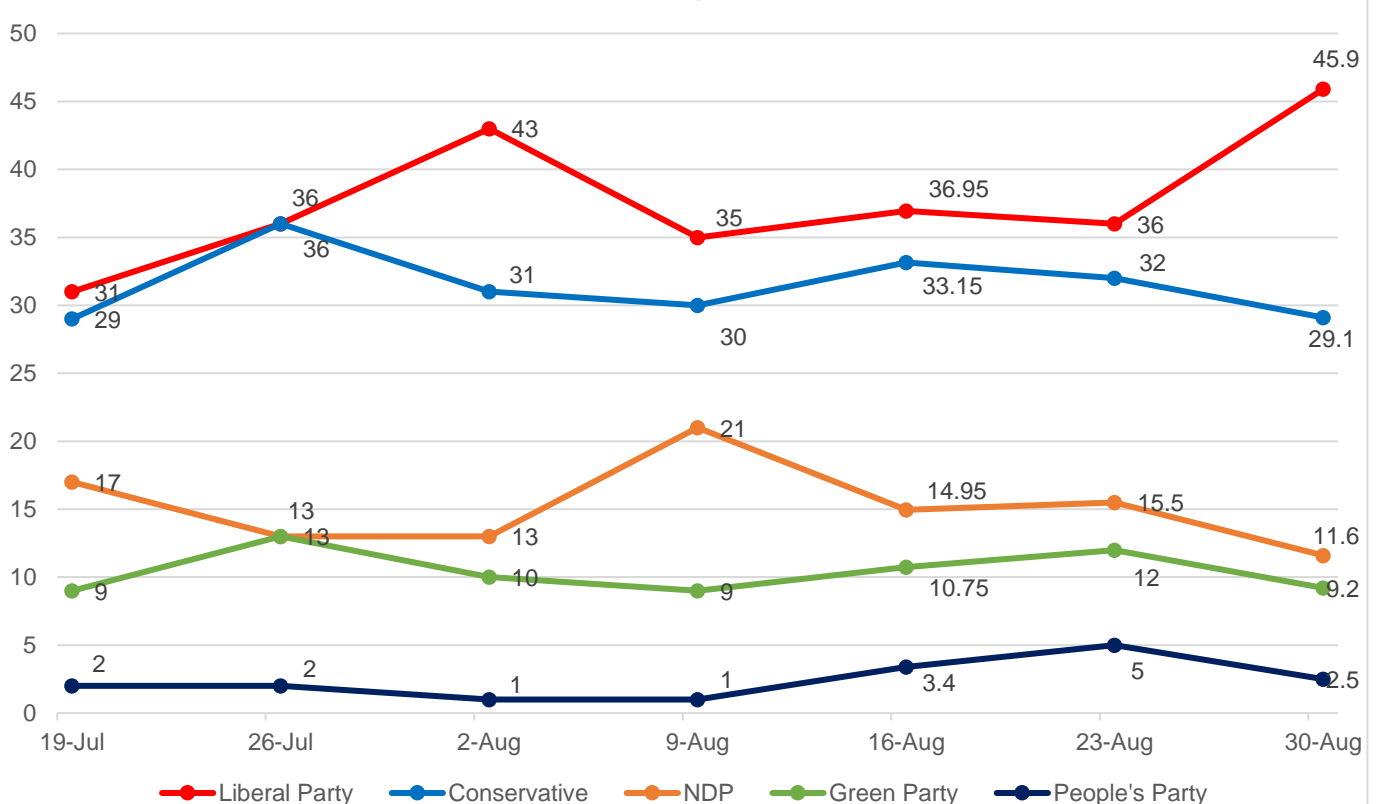
The Prime Minister can call the election anytime between September 1 and September 15. A shorter campaign would benefit the Liberals. In the pre-writ period, Ministers can continue to campaign on the government's dime, and any fundraising advantage the Conservative have over the Liberals would be diminished. Canadians pay less attention to politics outside elections, too. That gives Scheer less time to establish himself.

# Polling

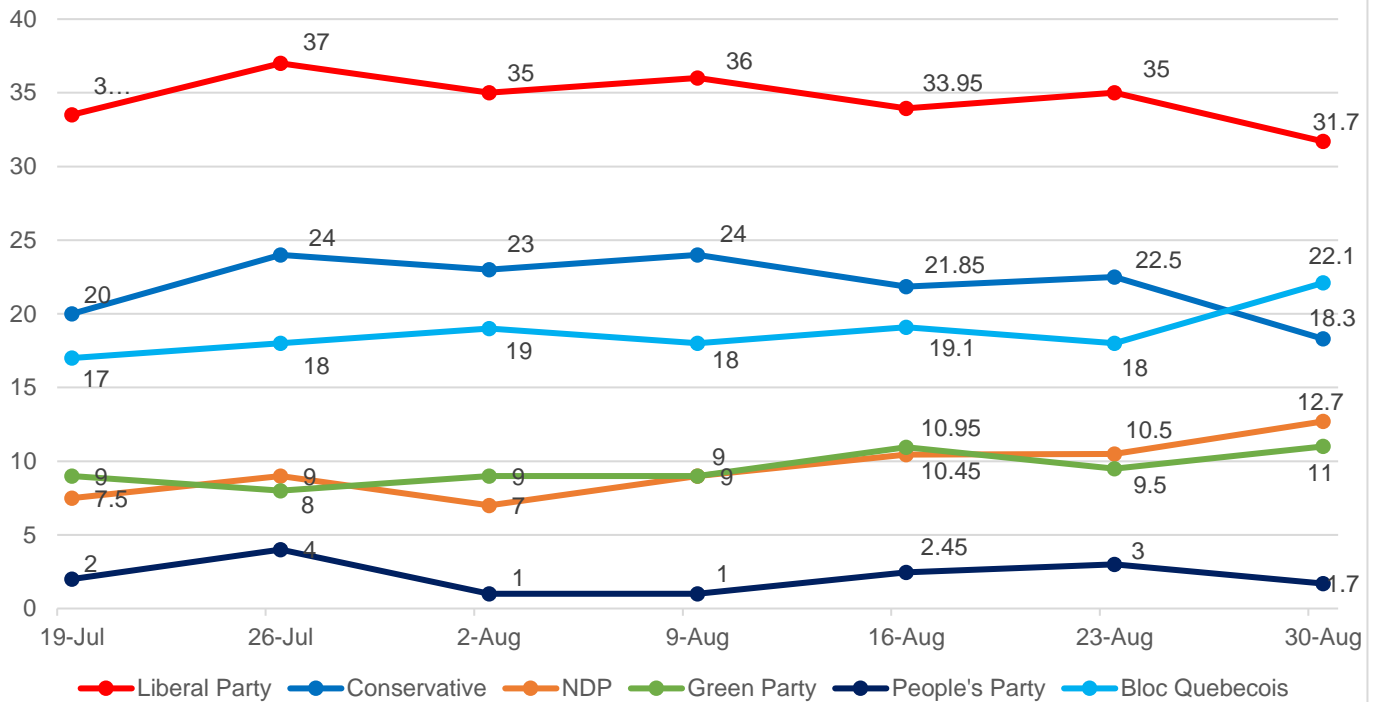
## National Polling Data - 2019



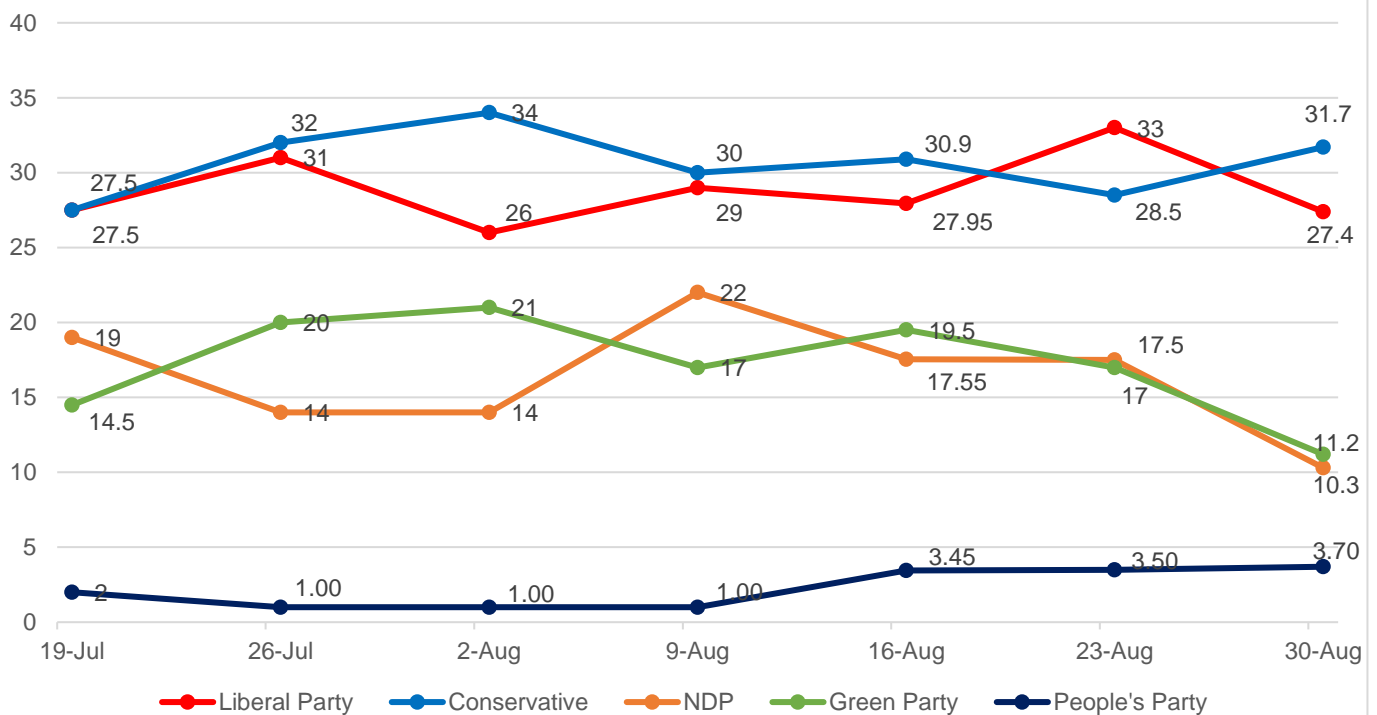
## Ontario Polling Data - 2019



## Quebec Polling Data - 2019



## B.C. Polling Data - 2019



# What the Numbers Tell Us

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EKOS Research was the only pollster in the field this week. That means we can't average the numbers like we've done in the past. A single poll will always look different than the average, and that's true for our graphs this week.

The biggest difference is in Ontario. EKOS' president and chief pollster Frank Graves has the Liberals leading the Conservatives by 17 points—a huge gap between the leading political parties. Ontario is Canada's largest province, and it typically holds the balance of power in Canadian politics. If the Liberals really do lead by that much in Ontario, it is a big, big problem for Andrew Scheer and the Conservatives and great news for the Liberals.

Graves also found that the Conservatives and Bloc have traded places in Quebec. Last week, the Conservatives were at 22 percent support and the Bloc at 18 percent. This week the situation is reversed. Although four percentage points might not seem like much, in tight four-way races it could mean the difference

between winning and losing. With these numbers, the Bloc could pick up more seats at the Conservatives' expense.

Conservatives might be worried looking at these numbers. The NDP should also be concerned. EKOS has them behind, tied or slightly ahead of the Greens in all three of our key provincial battlegrounds, including Quebec, where the party started its historic Orange Wave victories in 2011. They're in a dog fight for third place across the country. That's a major difference between past elections, where the NDP was the clear alternative to the Grits and Tories.

In general, Graves' polling shows a favorable trend for the Liberal party. While their national support is only marginally increasing, they're holding strong advantages in Ontario and Quebec, Canada's two most populous provinces. The economy is doing well, and people are generally happy about the state of the country. Yes, there is some frustration with Trudeau. But is it enough for Canadians to switch leaders? Canadians historically give Prime

Minister's another government before they vote them out. It's a recipe for success that many Liberal leaders have used in the past. Liberals are confident they can cook it up again in 2019.

But before anyone gets too excited, we'll note that Frank Graves has a reputation for overestimating Liberal support and underestimating the Conservative vote. (A claim Graves vehemently denies.) We also live an age of social media and contentious politics. People become frustrated with political leaders more quickly than ever before. Anger could boil over at our "sunny ways" Prime Minister in a flash.

We also caution that the election campaign hasn't even started yet.

Events will happen. Party leaders will have to improvise and impress Canadians. As political junkies, we can't wait to see what those events will be, and how the campaigns react.

## Ridings to Watch



Prospectus has selected 20 ridings that are competitive races between the major political parties. By focusing on these ridings and seeing how well each party is doing over the course of the campaign, we can have a good idea of who will win election 2019.

You can view our interactive Ridings to Watch map, updated with the latest polling numbers, [here](#).